Lecture 7: Human Behaviour and Organisational Culture

Part1 - Introduction to Human Behaviour

Each individual is unique, and human behaviour is regarded as one of the most complex aspects to understand. In an organisation, there are numerous challenges that can directly or indirectly influence employees' behaviour. At times, managers must first assess specific tasks, identify the skills required, and form teams with complementary abilities. To address various factors effectively, it is essential to analyse safety settings, individual capabilities, and limitations beforehand. Several elements can impact organisational behaviour, which are outlined below:

A. Personal Factors

Personal factors influencing an individual's behaviour can be categorised into two main groups: biographical and learned characteristics.

1. Biographical Characteristics

These are traits that are inherited and genetic in nature, making them immutable. If managers understand the strengths and limitations of each employee, they can effectively leverage organisational behavioural techniques. Key biographical characteristics include:

- **Physical Characteristics:** These include attributes such as skin, vision, height, and complexion, which can affect individual performance. Traits like being tall, slim, or of a certain build also influence perceptions. In a workplace, individuals with good physical appearance are expected to maintain appropriate conduct and attire, even if body structure and behaviour are not directly correlated.

- **Age:** Age is an inherent characteristic and can influence performance. Younger individuals are often seen as more energetic, innovative, and willing to take risks, whereas performance may decline with age.

- **Gender:** Gender, a genetic attribute, has sparked significant debate. Traditional views suggest women are more emotional, and slight differences in male and female behaviour can influence job performance. Research indicates that female employees often show higher turnover rates due to personal obligations.

- **Religion:** Religion and its associated culture play a key role in shaping ethics, morals, and individual attitudes toward work. Highly religious individuals tend to exhibit stronger moral values and are often guided by their personal beliefs in decision-making.

- **Marital Status:** Studies suggest that marital responsibilities can impact job stability. Married employees are often more satisfied with their jobs, have fewer absences, and exhibit lower turnover rates.

- **Experience:** An employee's tenure or experience significantly impacts organisational performance. Seniority is often linked with higher productivity and efficiency, and there is typically a negative correlation between employee turnover and seniority.

2. Learned Characteristics

Learning refers to a permanent change in behaviour resulting from interactions with the environment. Since biographical traits cannot be altered, managers focus on understanding and predicting learned characteristics, which include:

- **Personality:** Personality extends beyond physical appearance to include traits such as persistence, dominance, and aggressiveness. It is a dynamic concept reflecting the growth of an individual's psychological system and plays a crucial role in shaping organisational behaviour.

- **Perception:** This is the process of interpreting information to derive meaning from the world. Perception influences how individuals respond to situations within an organisation.

- **Values:** Values represent core beliefs that shape judgements and actions across various scenarios. They influence attitudes, motivations, and perceptions and are often shaped by external factors such as parents, teachers, and peers.

B. Environmental Factors

External environmental factors significantly influence individual behaviour.

1. Economic Factors:

Economic conditions can shape employees' actions and attitudes. Key elements include:

- **Employment Levels:** Limited job opportunities may force individuals to stay in unsatisfactory roles, leading to a focus on monetary benefits.

- **Wage Rates:** Salary levels are a primary concern for employees and directly affect their decisions and satisfaction.

- **General Economic Environment:** Public sector employees may be less affected by economic cycles due to job security, whereas private sector employees often experience fluctuations based on economic conditions.

Other environmental influences include social, political, and legal factors, all of which affect organisational behaviour.

C. Organisational Factors

Organisational systems and resources also play a role in shaping behaviour. These include:

1. Physical Facilities:

The workplace environment, including cleanliness, lighting, ventilation, and noise levels, can affect employee behaviour and performance.

2. Structure and Design:

The organisational structure and the placement of individuals within the hierarchy significantly impact their roles, responsibilities, and behaviour.

3. Leadership:

The leadership style and behaviour of managers greatly influence employees' attitudes and actions. Effective leadership involves guidance, coaching, and creating a supportive environment.

4. Reward Systems:

The organisational reward system directly impacts employee performance and motivation by providing recognition and compensation.

In summary, individual and environmental factors intertwine with organisational elements to shape employee behaviour. Recognising and addressing these factors is key to fostering a productive and harmonious workplace.

Common sources for such content might include foundational texts in organisational behaviour, psychology, or management studies, such as:

1. **Stephen P. Robbins and Timothy A. Judge** - *Organizational Behavior*

2. **Fred Luthans** - *Organizational Behavior: An Evidence-Based Approach*

3. **Edgar Schein** - *Organizational Culture and Leadership*

Part 2 - Evolution of safety climate and culture

2.1 Introduction

Over the years, significant efforts have been made within the EU and the UK by various major industrial sectors, such as nuclear energy, railways, and aviation, to address concerns about human factors that have contributed to, or could potentially contribute to, serious incidents. For example, the Advisory Committee on the Safety of Nuclear Installations (ACSNI) in the UK published a report in 1993 (HSC, 1993), which examined the concept and measurement of safety culture. Similarly, the European Union has taken proactive steps in this area, such as the European Aviation Safety Agency's (EASA) promotion of a safety culture framework and the European Rail Agency's (ERA) initiatives to enhance human factors in rail safety.

The term 'safety climate' later emerged, and the terms 'culture' and 'climate' have often been used interchangeably in safety discussions, with some considering them synonymous. However, over time, researchers in the field of human factors across Europe have identified subtle but important differences between the two concepts, suggesting they are not identical. These distinctions have shaped safety frameworks in several EU sectors, influencing regulatory standards and practices.

Read:

What Does Safety Culture Look Like in the Workplace?
https://www.leaderfactor.com/learn/what-is-safety-culture-in-the-workplace

Understanding safety culture

https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0024/19365/understanding-safety-culture.pdf

Behavioural safety approaches (behaviour modification)

https://www.hse.gov.uk/humanfactors/topics/behaviouralintor.htm

2.2 'Safety climate' versus 'safety culture'

As is often the case with evolving concepts, there are numerous definitions of 'safety culture,' including phrases such as "the way we do things around here," "a set of attitudes, beliefs, or norms," or "a safety ethic." However, the Advisory Committee on the Safety of Nuclear Installations (ACSNI) proposed a working definition in 1993, stating that safety culture is:

"The product of individual and group values, attitudes, perceptions, competencies, and patterns of behaviour that determine the commitment to, and the style and proficiency of, an organisation's health and safety management" (HSC, 1993).

This definition has since been widely recognised as a benchmark, particularly with its adoption by the UK's Health and Safety Executive (HSE) in incident investigation reports and various other publications. Its enduring relevance reflects its utility across diverse sectors, including compliance with EU directives and standards related to workplace safety.

Further development of this definition was highlighted by the HSE (2005), citing Cooper (2000), who identified three core dimensions of safety culture:

1. **Psychological** – often termed 'safety climate,' encompassing attitudes, perceptions, and feelings about safety.

2. **Behavioural** – linked to the actions and practices of individuals within an organisation, often described as 'organisational' safety behaviour.

3. **Situational** – referring to the physical, procedural, and organisational aspects that influence safety, commonly associated with 'corporate' culture.

These elements align closely with the EU's approach to fostering a preventive culture in occupational health and safety, as seen in directives such as the Framework Directive 89/391/EEC, which emphasises the integration of safety into every level of organisational operation. Examples of this alignment include the safety climate assessments used in industries such as aviation and healthcare, where EU member states frequently incorporate these principles into risk management and training initiatives.

Aspect	Description	Focus
Psychological Aspects	"How people feel" - Can be described as the safety climate of the organisation, which is concerned with individual and group values, attitudes, and perceptions.	Emotional and perceptual dimensions of safety culture.
Behavioural Aspects	"What people do" - Safety-related actions and behaviours.	Observable safety-related actions and practices.
Situational Aspects	"What the organisation has" - Policies, procedures, regulation, organisational structures, and the management systems.	Structural and systemic elements of safety culture.

Table 1: A three aspect approach to safety culture (based upon Cooper, 2000)

The first key element introduces the concept of the 'safety climate,' which relates to how individuals perceive and feel about health and safety, as well as the processes involved in its management. This encompasses the beliefs, attitudes, values, and perceptions held by individuals and groups at all organisational levels. This collective perception forms what is referred to as an organisation's 'safety climate.' The safety climate can be assessed through subjective questionnaires designed to capture the workforce's perceptions and attitudes at a specific point in time.

The second key element focuses on behaviour, encompassing the actions and tasks employees undertake within an organisation that are safety-related. These behaviours, often shaped by the organisation's culture, reflect how safety is operationalised and can be observed at individual and group levels.

The third key element is situational, referring to the structural aspects of the organisation, such as its overarching management systems. These include policies, procedures, controls, and communication methods that guide and support the organisation's approach to health and safety.

These three dimensions—safety climate, behaviour, and situational factors—are interconnected and cannot be viewed in isolation. This relationship is illustrated in Table 1, where the interdependencies are represented.

In an EU context, organisations may reference frameworks such as the EU-OSHA (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work) guidelines, which emphasise the integration of these aspects into cohesive health and safety strategies. For example, safety climate questionnaires could be adapted to meet the cultural diversity of a multinational workforce, while behavioural insights might align with EU-wide initiatives like Vision Zero for workplace safety.

Further info:

Organisational culture: Overview

https://www.hse.gov.uk/humanfactors/topics/culture.htm

Part 3 - Organisational change and culture

3.1 Introduction

Before we delve into our final exploration of organisational culture, it is crucial to examine how external factors shape an organisation and how change must be approached with tact and sensitivity.

In Part 2, we initiated our discussion on culture, emphasising that it cannot simply be imposed upon an organisation. For a culture to thrive, it must be embraced by the vast majority of its members. Cultural transformation is never instantaneous; it is deeply rooted in the shared values and beliefs of the workforce, which are shaped by the unique personalities and behaviours of individuals.

Let us revisit the concept of personality, which can be defined as the relatively stable and enduring characteristics of an individual – the consistent ways in which they think, feel, and act over time. Personality and behaviour are largely influenced by how individuals perceive themselves within their environment.

Now consider the challenge of altering the personality and behaviour of an entire workforce. Ineffective change management can lead to significant conflict, highlighting the importance of strategic and thoughtful planning. In the context of the European Union, where organisations often operate across diverse cultural and regulatory environments, managing change can be even more complex. For example, aligning the workplace culture of a multinational organisation with both EU-wide directives and local customs requires a nuanced and patient approach.

Achieving cultural change, particularly within such a dynamic and multi-layered context, demands time, careful consideration, and respect for the unique characteristics of all stakeholders involved.

3.2 - The Future of Organisations

Over recent decades, traditional organisational models—rooted in classical management principles and bureaucracy—have experienced a marked decline. Predictions of transformation, such as those by Drucker (1998), have largely come to fruition. Drucker envisioned future organisations as being knowledge-driven, composed predominantly of specialists who manage and evaluate their own performance. Similarly, Miles and Snow (1986) forecasted that intense competitive pressures would lead to organisational forms relying on self-managed teams and fluid boundaries, enabling greater flexibility and adaptability.

These forecasts align with observable trends. For instance, the "Delta" organisation model, represented by an inverted hierarchical triangle, emphasises autonomy and

customer-facing roles. In such models, management is increasingly viewed as a supportive function rather than a controlling one.

Contemporary organisational evolution includes significant practices like delayering, downsizing, process re-engineering, and promoting self-directed teams. These initiatives challenge traditional hierarchies, fostering decentralised authority and increased responsibility at lower levels. Matrix structures—combining functional specialists into interdisciplinary project teams—are now widely adopted to address specific tasks with agility. Although matrix organisations pre-date recent shifts, their application has intensified due to the need for rapid adaptability. Similarly, collateral structures, which operate alongside bureaucratic frameworks, and network organisations, which outsource non-core activities like advertising and distribution, are on the rise. Entrepreneurial models are also gaining traction, where internal employee groups function as semi-autonomous business units.

The drivers of this structural transformation include:

- Growing international competition within the EU and globally.

- A heightened focus on excellence, particularly in quality and innovation.

- Technological advancements reshaping the nature of work.

- Higher levels of education and rising expectations among employees.

- Challenges in recruiting and retaining skilled personnel.

- The ongoing restructuring of organisations and employment patterns.

In response to these forces, organisations are striving for increased adaptability and flexibility. This often entails adopting more organic, differentiated structures, reducing hierarchical layers, and delegating authority to lower levels. Simultaneously, cost-cutting measures, such as delayering and labour expense reduction, are prioritised to remain competitive.

For health and safety professionals, anticipating these organisational shifts is crucial. As workplaces evolve, the ability to foresee emerging hazards and risks becomes an essential skill to ensure safety and well-being in dynamic environments. By aligning with these trends, professionals can proactively address the challenges posed by modern organisational transformations.

3.3 Managing Change

Organisational change can broadly be described as a scenario in which a significant number of individuals within an organisation are required to adopt new behaviours or ways of working. However, it is rarely just the individuals who need to adapt; other organisational components are also likely to be affected. Leavitt's (1965) model offers a straightforward framework for understanding the key elements influenced by change.
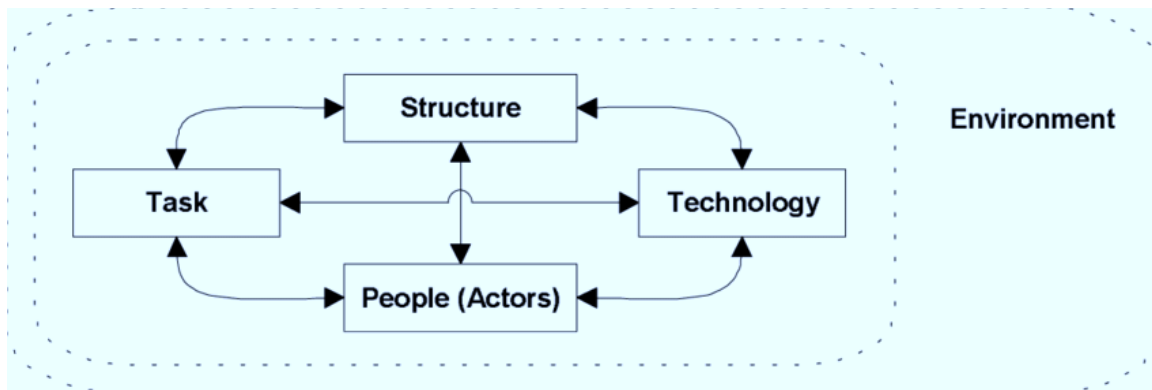

Figure 1: Elements affected by change (Leavitt, 1965)

The model highlights that these elements—people, technology, structure, and tasks—are interconnected. For instance, enhancing the workforce's self-management skills could pave the way for changes in technology and organisational structure, potentially altering the nature of tasks as well. Conversely, introducing new technology may necessitate shifts in employees' skill sets and adjustments to the structure. It is also important to recognise that changes in one area may have unintended consequences in another; for example, technological advancements might provoke resistance among employees.

Managing organisational change involves addressing the interplay between people, technology, structure, and tasks, while also considering the scope and impact of these changes. Within the EU context, initiatives such as digital transformation or sustainability directives often require organisations to balance these elements carefully. For example, adapting to the European Green Deal may demand technological upgrades, reskilling employees, and redefining organisational workflows, all of which highlight the interdependence and complexity of managing change effectively.

3.3.1 Resistance to Change

The Necessity of Managing Change

Change is integral to health and safety management, particularly in the context of EU frameworks such as Directive 89/391/EEC, which emphasises adapting to technical and organisational developments to improve worker safety and health. However, resistance—whether individual or cultural—is a significant barrier. By addressing the underlying sources of resistance and fostering engagement, organisations can successfully modify their culture and improve outcomes.

Change as a Sequential Process

Change typically follows a sequence of stages:

1. **Emerging**: Secure the commitment of management.

2. **Managing**: Recognise the value of employees and cultivate personal accountability.

3. **Involving**: Engage all staff to foster cooperation and commitment towards improvement.

4. **Cooperating**: Establish consistency and address complacency.

5. **Continually Improving**: Sustain progress through ongoing refinement.

The **ADKAR Model** (ADKAR change management model overview, n.d.) outlines five critical milestones in the change process:

1. **Awareness**: Understanding the need for change.

2. **Desire**: Developing a personal motivation to engage with change.

3. **Knowledge**: Acquiring the necessary information or skills.

4. **Ability**: Applying the knowledge effectively.

5. **Reinforcement**: Embedding the change to sustain its benefits.

Levels of Resistance and Evolution in Change

1. **Denial**: "They don't really mean it."

2. **Resistance**: "This organisation no longer values us."

3. **Exploration**: "What does this mean for me?"

4. **Commitment**: "How can I contribute to making this work?"

Securing Buy-in

To navigate resistance and gain support:

- Clearly communicate the benefits of the change.

- Address individual and group concerns transparently.

- Foster a sense of commitment among all stakeholders.

The Role of Engagement

Engagement is central to successful change management. As highlighted by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE, 2006), *engagement can occur without behaviour change, but behaviour change cannot happen without engagement*.

Resistance is Inevitable

It is important to anticipate resistance at both individual and organisational levels. Resistance often emerges from deeply ingrained values, beliefs, and attitudes, as well as personal needs, perceptions, and motivations.

Resistance Factors

Individual resistance to change can stem from various sources, such as:

- **Habit**: Difficulty in breaking routines.

- **Need for Security**: Discomfort with leaving familiar surroundings; fear of the unknown.

- **Lack of Understanding**: Insufficient awareness or clarity regarding the change.

- **Social Factors**: Influence of group norms and expectations.

- **Low Tolerance for Change**: Reluctance to adapt due to past experiences or personal disposition.

- **Lack of Trust**: Distrust in leadership or the change process itself.

Read:

5 Tips for Managing Change in the Workplace

https://online.hbs.edu/blog/post/managing-change-in-the-workplace

Managing Change in the Nuclear Industry: The Effects on Safety

https://www-pub.iaea.org/MTCD/Publications/PDF/Pub1173_web.pdf

3.3.2 Addressing Resistance

Reason for Resistance, How to Address It

1. **Loss of control**

   - Allow those affected to have a say in decision-making, participate in planning, and take ownership of the process.

2. **Uncertainty during change**

   - Establish a sense of security by providing clarity through defined processes, straightforward steps, and clear schedules.

3. **Sudden changes without warning**

   - Keep everyone informed about developments and ensure communication is timely and transparent.

4. **Too many changes at once**

   - Limit unrelated changes to avoid overwhelming people. Where possible, maintain familiar elements and avoid unnecessary alterations.

5. **Loss of face for those associated with the status quo**

   - Acknowledge and celebrate valuable aspects of the past to preserve dignity and respect for previous contributions.

6. **Doubts about competence**

   - Offer comprehensive resources such as training, mentoring, and support. If feasible, run new and old systems concurrently during the transition phase to build confidence.

7. **Increased workload**

   - Designate specific individuals or teams to focus solely on managing the change process. Recognise and reward their contributions.

8. **Ripple effects impacting other areas**

   - Expand the circle of stakeholders to include all affected parties. Collaborate with them to identify and mitigate disruptions.

9. **Past resentments resurfacing**

   - Address historical grievances with conciliatory actions before emphasising forward-looking goals.

10. **Genuine threats from change**

   o Be honest and transparent about potential hardships. Take swift and equitable action, such as offering a significant one-time redundancy package with robust support, rather than prolonged, incremental cuts.

1 to 10 are adapted from King, Sidhu, & Smith (2015), p. 314

EU Context and Examples

In the European Union, these strategies align with principles of social dialogue and the EU's commitment to participatory governance. For instance, during restructuring processes supported by the European Social Fund (ESF), organisations are encouraged to engage workers' councils, provide reskilling opportunities, and mitigate negative impacts on employment through collaborative planning and funding. Similarly, the European Pillar of Social Rights underscores the importance of transparency, fairness, and inclusion in organisational change initiatives.

3.4 Organisational Culture: Types of Culture

Organisational culture is a widely studied concept, with research ongoing to better understand its characteristics and impact. Below are descriptions of four key types of organisational culture:

1. **Power Culture** – This type of culture revolves around a single individual or a small group of individuals who hold the authority to make key decisions. Power cultures are most commonly observed in smaller enterprises, where bureaucracy and formal rules are minimal. Decision-making is largely influenced by the authority or charisma of those at the centre.

2. **Role Culture** – Found in organisations with clearly defined roles and responsibilities, this culture is highly structured and bureaucratic. Individuals operate strictly within the boundaries of their assigned roles, which can limit creativity and innovation. Influence and authority stem from the organisational position rather than the person holding it.

3. **Task Culture** – This culture is centred around teamwork and expertise. Teams are formed to address specific tasks or projects and are granted the authority to make decisions. Task cultures are characterised by a higher degree of creativity and flexibility, as the focus is on achieving objectives through collaboration and specialised knowledge.

4. **Person Culture** – In this culture, individuals are at the forefront, and decision-making power is distributed among them. Such cultures thrive in loosely structured organisations, where individuals co-exist without strict oversight. Organisational decisions are made collectively through mutual agreement.

Insights on Organisational Culture

Schein (2010, p.18) defines organisational (or corporate) culture as *"a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be valid, and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems."* Schein identifies three distinct levels of culture:

- **Artefacts**: The most visible elements of culture, such as behaviours, dress codes, and physical environments.

- **Espoused Values**: The stated values and norms, such as organisational goals and strategies.

- **Basic Underlying Assumptions**: The deepest, often unconscious, beliefs and values that shape organisational behaviour.

Broader Context and EU Relevance

In the European Union, where cross-border collaboration and cultural diversity are prominent, understanding organisational culture is crucial. For example, task cultures are often favoured in multinational project teams funded by EU programmes such as Horizon Europe, as they encourage innovation and decision-making based on expertise. Conversely, the structured nature of role cultures may be more prevalent in EU regulatory bodies, where adherence to protocols is essential.

Reference:

Schein, E. H. (2010). *Organizational Culture and Leadership*. Hoboken, US: Jossey-Bass.

3.4.1 Perspectives on Organisational Cultures

The **cultural web** illustrates the behavioural, physical, and symbolic manifestations of an organisation's culture, serving as a framework to describe and analyse its characteristics (Johnson, Whittington, & Scholes, 2014, pp. 96–98).

- **Routine behaviours**: These reflect how members of the organisation interact with one another and with external stakeholders, forming the norms for "how things are done" or "how things should happen" within the organisation. For example, EU institutions often follow detailed protocols to ensure consistency and impartiality in decision-making.

- **Rituals**: These are distinctive activities or events that highlight what is deemed important within the organisation. They may include formal processes, such as annual performance reviews, or informal traditions, such as team-building exercises. An example might be the European Commission's structured approach to policy consultation.

- **Stories**: Narratives shared among members help shape the organisation's identity, highlighting key events, successes, failures, or notable individuals. For instance, stories about significant EU treaties, such as the Maastricht Treaty, help embed their importance in the cultural fabric of the Union.

- **Symbols**: Logos, office layouts, titles, or jargon serve as visual and linguistic representations of the organisation. For instance, the EU flag, with its circle of stars, symbolises unity and shared purpose across member states.

- **Power structures**: These reveal where influence resides within the organisation. While power often aligns with seniority or official roles, in some organisations, influence can emerge at different levels or from specific functions. In the EU context, decision-making power might rest with the European Council, but the influence of other bodies like the European Parliament or even non-state actors can be significant.

- **Control systems**: These are the mechanisms for measurement and reward, directing focus towards priorities. For example, monitoring frameworks used in EU funding programmes ensure alignment with objectives like sustainability and innovation.

- **Organisational structure**: This reflects the distribution of power and delineates relationships and activities. It includes formal hierarchies and informal systems of influence. The EU's multi-tier governance structure exemplifies this, with distinct yet interconnected roles for supranational and national levels.

- **The paradigm**: This is the overarching set of assumptions and shared understandings that underpin and reinforce the other elements of the cultural

web. For an EU institution, this might revolve around principles of subsidiarity, democracy, and integration.

Reference

Johnson, G., Whittington, R., & Scholes, K. (2014). *Fundamentals of Strategy*. Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd.

3.4.2 Early Influences on an Organisation's Culture

In examining the future of organisations, it becomes evident that numerous factors shape their culture. However, the formative stages of an organisation's development often hold the most enduring influence, as these early elements can be the hardest to alter over time. Key influences include:

- **Historical Foundations**: The organisation's origins, founding principles, and past experiences create a cultural legacy that often persists.

- **Core Function and Strategy**: An organisation's primary purpose and strategic direction significantly shape its identity and operating norms.

- **Size, Location, and Environment**: The scale of operations, geographical positioning, and external conditions—such as regulatory frameworks or societal expectations—play a critical role. For instance, EU legislation and directives often influence operational standards and cultural norms, especially in areas like sustainability and employee rights.

- **Technology**: The tools and systems adopted early on can define workflows, communication patterns, and adaptability to innovation. For example, the EU's focus on digital transformation has led many organisations to integrate advanced technologies as a cultural norm.

- **Management and Leadership**: Leadership styles and managerial practices established in the initial phases often set the tone for organisational behaviour and decision-making. For instance, organisations rooted in EU principles of social dialogue may reflect these values in leadership approaches.

Understanding these early influences is essential for those aiming to shape or transform an organisation's culture in a sustainable and meaningful way.

2.4.3 The Impact of National Culture

Organisations do not operate in isolation; they are inherently influenced by the national contexts in which they exist.

Hofstede (1991) conducted extensive research into cultural differences among IBM employees in 19 countries. His work, which has been pivotal in understanding cultural dynamics, originally focused on four key dimensions, later expanding to five. These dimensions provide a framework for assessing cultural differences:

- **Power Distance**: This dimension examines the extent to which inequality among individuals is accepted as normal within a culture. It reflects how societies perceive and establish superior–subordinate relationships.

- **Uncertainty Avoidance**: This refers to the degree to which a culture prefers structured over unstructured situations, highlighting whether risk-taking is encouraged or avoided.

- **Individualism vs Collectivism**: This dimension explores whether people tend to act independently or as members of cohesive groups, assessing whether cultural norms favour individualistic behaviour or group solidarity.

- **Masculinity vs Femininity**: This distinguishes cultures that value assertiveness and competition (masculine traits) from those prioritising personal relationships, quality of life, and care for others (feminine traits).

While Hofstede's studies have faced critique, they remain a foundation for understanding how cultural differences shape organisational behaviour. Other research underscores the importance of recognising national cultural differences to foster collaboration and reduce conflict, particularly in multinational organisations or when engaging with host nations.

Hodgetts and Luthans (1991) identify several benefits of a strong organisational culture:

- **Effective Control**: Widely endorsed values and norms encourage compliance and consistent behaviour.

- **Normative Order**: Shared beliefs about appropriate conduct promote uniform actions across the organisation.

- **Innovation**: A culture supportive of creativity fosters new ideas and approaches.

- **Employee Commitment**: Strongly shared values and norms enhance identification with and ownership of organisational goals.

- **Strategic Coherence**: A shared vision leads to consistent planning and implementation, ensuring alignment of goals and actions.

However, challenges arise when a strong culture does not align with the organisation's need for high performance.

Cultural Factors and Hofstede's Model

As previously discussed, the interaction of an individual's values, beliefs, norms, and emotions shapes their perception of themselves within the world. Similarly, organisational culture emerges from the interplay of individuals' diverse values and creates a shared vision. This shared organisational vision is akin to an individual's self-image, fostering pride and reinforcing organisational identity.

When fundamental assumptions about values and norms are widely shared and embedded, they create a robust culture with strong commitment to the organisation's vision and mission. Such assumptions guide consistent behaviour, even if they are not explicitly documented. Written mission statements can reinforce these shared assumptions, but they lose relevance if not genuinely reflective of the organisation's culture.

Empowerment, a key aspect of modern organisational culture, highlights the importance of treating individuals as creative, autonomous contributors rather than mere resources. Characteristics of an empowering organisational culture include:

- Mutual respect and valuing one another.

- Encouragement of creativity and innovation.

- Shared decision-making and access to information.

- Focus on customer satisfaction and results-driven performance.

- Emphasis on responsibility, commitment, and competence development.

Managing Cultural Change

There is a divide among scholars and practitioners in how they define and manage organisational culture. Some view culture as what people *do* (behaviours), while others focus on what people *value and believe*. Effective cultural change requires addressing both dimensions:

- Behavioural changes may be achieved by altering practices and routines.

- Deeper cultural transformation involves shifting underlying beliefs, values, and emotions to align with organisational goals.

In the EU context, organisations must also navigate cultural differences among member states, where national cultures influence workplace norms, communication styles, and leadership expectations. For example, high power distance cultures, such as those in parts of Southern Europe, may prefer hierarchical structures, while more individualistic and low power distance cultures, such as in Scandinavia, favour collaborative decision-making. Recognising and adapting to these nuances is essential for fostering cohesion in multinational and cross-border operations.

Part 4: Developing health and safety cultures

4.1 Introduction

The presence of a particular organisational culture is often described through sentiments like *"this is what it feels like to be here"* or through subjective opinions. However, it is valuable to apply more objective measures to assess the health and safety culture within an organisation.

In line with **HSG65**, the UK's Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has outlined four primary categories of indicators:

1. **Methods of control** within the organisation;

2. **Mechanisms for fostering cooperation** among individuals, safety representatives, and groups;

3. **Processes for effective communication** across all levels of the organisation; and

4. **Competence levels of individuals**.

These elements are inherently interconnected and mutually dependent. Consistent effort and attention across all four areas are essential for cultivating and sustaining a robust and positive health and safety culture.

From an EU perspective, these principles align with broader occupational health and safety frameworks, such as those outlined in the **EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work**. For instance, Directive 89/391/EEC underscores the importance of employer responsibility in ensuring communication, cooperation, and competence across the workplace—key components reflected in HSG65.

4.2 Control

Control is a cornerstone of effective management within any organisation, underpinning the achievement of clear objectives to which all members are committed. Managers must lead by example, fostering a culture of responsibility by developing and enforcing robust policies and procedures. These systems must then be consistently implemented, with supervisors and middle managers taking a hands-on role in operational control, monitoring conditions and performance to ensure their effectiveness. Policies and procedures lose their value if not rigorously monitored at the implementation stage.

Strong managerial direction and accountability are vital in cultivating a positive working environment. This approach encourages staff to embrace good health and safety practices as standard. The ultimate goal is to establish a collaborative culture where the organisation proactively manages and mitigates risks before incidents occur.

Control mechanisms must also extend beyond direct employer-employee interactions to encompass third parties, such as contractors and suppliers. These external stakeholders significantly impact the organisation and should adhere to comparable performance expectations, particularly in their interactions with the organisation.

Evidence of effective control within an organisation can be observed in the presence of a well-defined health and safety policy that includes:

- **Health and safety aims and objectives** tailored to the organisation;

- **Specific roles and responsibilities** assigned to all personnel;

- **Strategies to achieve these aims**, addressing risks unique to the organisation.

Additional indicators include:

- Conducting **suitable and sufficient risk assessments**;

- Engaging in **both proactive and reactive monitoring activities**;

- Ensuring that **third-party control mechanisms** are in place, such as:

    o Purchasing procedures that incorporate health and safety considerations into specifications for goods and services;

    o Robust selection and compliance procedures for contractors working on-site.

In the context of the European Union, organisations are required to align with key directives, such as the Framework Directive 89/391/EEC, which mandates risk assessments, prevention strategies, and employee involvement. For example, under this framework, an EU-based organisation might require contractors to adhere to site-

specific safety protocols and provide evidence of compliance with national safety standards, reinforcing a unified approach to health and safety.

4.2.1 Organisational Control

Organisational control manifests in various forms, and a comprehensive understanding of these mechanisms is a crucial component of effective health and safety management. The methods and approaches to organisational control are a reflection of the organisation's culture, which plays a pivotal role in determining how seamlessly health and safety practices are embedded into everyday operations.

Control mechanisms are essential for aligning activities with the organisation's specific aims and objectives. These may be set by management or emerge through collaborative consultation processes. Controls are most effective when they support the achievement of both organisational goals and individual objectives, fostering a cohesive and motivated workforce.

External forces can also influence organisational control. For example, within the European Union (EU) context, organisations are often required to comply with directives and regulations, such as the EU's Framework Directive 89/391/EEC on health and safety. This external control may be further enforced through inspections and penalties imposed by national enforcement authorities, such as the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) in the UK or similar bodies across EU Member States.

4.2.2 Organisational Conflict

At times, organisational controls fail, leading to a misalignment between the aspirations of the organisation and those of individuals within it. Such conflicts may emerge between individuals, departments, or other internal groups, and they must be addressed promptly to prevent escalation. Left unresolved, conflict can intensify, potentially resulting in a complete breakdown in relationships or even industrial action by segments of the workforce.

Sources of Conflict

Conflict can arise from a variety of sources, including:

1. **Failure to Consult** – When individuals or groups feel excluded from decision-making processes that significantly impact their position or well-being, discontent can grow.

2. **Misunderstandings** – For instance, when a manager attempts to exert control without adequately understanding the group or individuals involved.

3. **Differences of Opinion** – Disputes may arise over working methods, interpretations of company policies, or other operational matters.

4. **Interpersonal Issues** – Minor disagreements between individuals can escalate, polarising groups and creating divisions within teams.

5. **Resistance to Industrial Democracy** – Conflict can arise when employers are unwilling to embrace greater participation by employees in decision-making processes, as often encouraged within the EU framework for worker rights and social dialogue.

6. **Ethical Conflicts** – Individuals may feel their integrity is at risk if they follow a course of action advocated by the organisation. For example, healthcare professionals in the EU may face ethical dilemmas, such as doctors with anti-abortion views confronted by policies that conflict with their personal beliefs.

Conflict may emerge suddenly or develop gradually over time. Managers at all levels must remain vigilant, actively identifying potential sources of conflict and taking steps to address these issues before they escalate.

Resolving Conflict

Conflict resolution can be approached through three key frameworks:

1. **Human Relations Approach**
The human relations school of thought, championed by sociologists like Elton Mayo, emphasises the importance of leadership and effective communication. By fostering alignment between organisational and individual goals, employees are more likely to accept controls and respect management as collaborators in achieving shared objectives.

2. **Institutionalisation**
Establishing formalised procedures to address conflicts can be effective. A prime example is collective bargaining, commonly used across the EU, where pay and working conditions are reviewed at set intervals. Such structured negotiations promote a fair and transparent approach to resolving disputes.

3. **Social Engineering**
This involves shaping societal or organisational structures to influence behaviours and address systemic inequalities. For example, in the UK and across Europe, debates about reforming private education systems can be seen as efforts to dismantle entrenched privilege, promoting greater equality in access to opportunities and resources.

Control and Clarity in Roles

Effective control within an organisation depends on clear communication of expectations. This is particularly relevant in the context of health and safety, where policies should outline roles and responsibilities explicitly. Tools such as job descriptions, staff appraisal systems, and targeted health and safety rewards can reinforce performance standards. In cases of critical failure, disciplinary actions may be necessary, although these should always be a last resort.

By fostering transparency and fairness, EU-aligned practices like workplace consultations and adherence to health and safety directives (e.g., Directive 89/391/EEC) provide a robust framework for conflict prevention and resolution.

4.3 Employment and Reward

The primary motivation for most people to work is financial – earning a living to support their families, meet their needs, and enjoy leisure activities. The use of rewards, particularly financial incentives, is sometimes seen as a powerful tool for control and motivation. However, when such mechanisms are applied crudely, they can inadvertently undermine health and safety standards in the workplace.

For instance, bonuses awarded to teams with the lowest reported number of workplace accidents may encourage under-reporting, effectively suppressing critical safety data and obscuring an organisation's true performance. Similarly, piecework arrangements, where pay is linked to output, can lead to risky behaviour as employees may cut corners to increase productivity and earnings.

Standardisation of Employment Terms

Recent trends in employment have sought to harmonise terms and conditions within organisations. Salaried positions and standardised benefits have become more common, promoting a sense of equity. However, such changes can create discontent among employees who perceive their status or pay differentials as diminished. Employers have sought to mitigate this by introducing periodic group bonuses, extended leave allowances, or perks like private medical insurance. Nevertheless, while these incentives can temporarily boost motivation, they rarely result in lasting improvements to health and safety behaviours. Research shows that once incentive schemes end, employees often revert to previous practices.

True and sustainable progress in health and safety culture requires more than short-term incentives; it demands a fundamental shift in mindset. Employees must internalise health and safety as integral to their roles, fostering a culture where safety is embedded at every level of work. This type of cultural transformation goes beyond superficial measures and focuses on long-term behavioural change.

Evolving Employment Patterns

The modern workforce is increasingly diverse in its employment arrangements, which can pose unique challenges to health and safety management. Examples include:

1. **Temporary Workers**
   Temporary staff, often hired for short-term needs, usually work under similar conditions to permanent employees but face less job security.

2. **Casual Workers**
   Employed on an ad-hoc basis, casual workers are paid hourly and may not

receive the same benefits as permanent staff. Their irregular employment patterns and lack of integration into the organisation can affect their engagement with workplace policies, including health and safety.

3. **Agency Workers**
These workers, employed through agencies, operate similarly to casual staff but are placed with client organisations as required.

4. **Fixed-Term Contract Workers**
Popular among employers, these contracts provide flexibility while avoiding certain employee rights. While fixed-term employees work under similar conditions to permanent staff, their finite contracts allow termination without redundancy obligations.

5. **Shift Workers**
Working in shifts, often covering 24-hour periods, poses specific challenges, particularly concerning communication and health. Poor communication between shifts can lead to critical safety oversights, as was highlighted by incidents such as the **Piper Alpha disaster in 1988**. Additionally, shift patterns that disrupt natural body clocks can cause fatigue and reduced concentration, increasing the likelihood of errors. Employers must ensure that health and safety policies are effectively communicated and tailored to accommodate all working hours, including night shifts.

Integrating Health and Safety Across Employment Types

Effective health and safety management requires full integration of all employees, regardless of their employment type. UK and EU legislation mandates that employees must, at a minimum, receive adequate instruction and information to perform their roles safely. However, the employment terms set by organisations significantly impact employees' motivation, engagement, and alignment with organisational culture. Employers must recognise that these terms can directly influence the success or failure of their health and safety strategies.

While incentives and rewards can play a role in fostering a positive safety culture, they must be well-designed, transparent, and carefully implemented. Poorly planned schemes risk backfiring, creating unintended consequences that undermine long-term safety objectives.

Further insights:

https://www.hsestudyguide.com/safety-incentive-programs-in-the-workplace/

https://www.assp.org/news-and-articles/do-you-need-a-safety-incentive-program-heres-how-to-start

4.4 Improving Reliability

Enhancing human reliability is frequently linked to encouraging behaviour that aligns with organisational safety standards and protocols. Researchers have explored various methods to achieve this, such as motivational strategies, disciplinary measures, and beyond. However, numerous studies have consistently demonstrated that peer pressure is one of the most significant factors influencing behaviour.

A notable example is the *Hawthorne Studies*, conducted at the Hawthorne Works of the Western Electric Company in Cicero, Illinois. These studies, which began in 1924 and continued into the early 1930s, initially aimed to examine how changes in illumination intensity impacted productivity.

In these experiments, researchers divided participants into control and experimental groups. The experimental group was subjected to varying levels of lighting, while the control group worked under consistent lighting conditions. Surprisingly, productivity increased in both groups regardless of whether the lighting level in the experimental group was raised or lowered. Productivity only declined when lighting was reduced to near-moonlight levels. The findings suggested that light intensity was not the primary driver of productivity. Despite initially struggling to explain the results, Harvard professor Elton Mayo, who consulted on the studies, drew the following conclusions:

- Behaviour and sentiments are closely interconnected.

- Group influences have a profound impact on individual behaviour.

- Group standards determine individual worker output.

- Monetary incentives are less significant in influencing productivity compared to group norms, shared sentiments, and a sense of security.

Although the *Hawthorne Studies* have faced criticism since their publication, their central insight—that social interaction and group dynamics are key determinants of behaviour—remains widely acknowledged.

EU Context

This concept of peer pressure influencing behaviour has implications for workplace culture and organisational development across the European Union. For instance, in the EU's emphasis on collaborative frameworks such as the *European Pillar of Social Rights*, fostering positive peer dynamics can enhance workplace reliability and safety. Member States often integrate lessons from studies like these into initiatives aimed at improving employee engagement, particularly in sectors such as manufacturing and healthcare, where group cohesion and standards play a vital role in productivity and safety outcomes.

4.4.1 Learning

Human reliability is heavily influenced by learning. Robbins (1997) defines learning as "any relatively permanent change in behaviour that occurs as a result of experience." While one can observe individuals engaging in the process of learning, the actual act of learning itself cannot be directly seen. Instead, it is only through a change in behaviour that learning can be definitively identified. Although alternative definitions of learning exist, they all share the fundamental concept of change occurring within the learner. Several prominent theories of learning include:

- **Classical Conditioning**: This involves a response to a stimulus that would not typically elicit such a reaction. For example, a dog becoming excited when its owner puts on a coat is a classic case. The excitement arises not from the coat itself but from the learned association with going for a walk. This principle is foundational in behavioural psychology and has applications across various fields, including education and workplace training.

- **Operant Conditioning**: In this model, voluntary behaviour is influenced by its consequences, whether through rewards or the avoidance of punishment. The key factor is the voluntary nature of the behaviour. For instance, employees may adopt safe working practices to gain recognition or avoid penalties, embodying the classic "carrot and stick" approach. This concept underpins many workplace incentive schemes in both the UK and EU labour contexts.

- **Social Learning**: This theory posits that individuals learn by observing others or by hearing about their experiences. Social networks, including family, peers, and colleagues, play a crucial role in this type of learning. For example, within the EU's Erasmus+ programmes, collaborative learning among students and professionals fosters skill development by sharing diverse cultural and practical experiences.

- **Experiential Learning**: In contrast to social learning, this approach involves learning through direct experience. Skills are developed "on the job," often following explanation, demonstration, and supervised practice. A prime example is the UK and EU vocational qualification frameworks, such as apprenticeships, which are grounded in experiential learning principles to ensure competency development.

- **Cognitive Learning**: This involves acquiring knowledge through processes such as thinking, analysis, and reflection. For example, reading a technical manual or engaging with EU regulations on occupational health and safety enables learners to process, interpret, and apply information effectively.

Recognising that individuals have diverse learning styles is essential, as one method may resonate with one person but not another. In any case, learning plays a critical role in mitigating human error by shaping behaviour, aligning with the EU's emphasis on lifelong learning and its role in enhancing workplace safety and productivity.

4.4.2 Problem Solving

Human error is frequently the result of deficiencies or failures in the problem-solving process. Problem-solving begins when an individual recognises a need or stimulus that signifies the presence of an issue requiring resolution. The effectiveness of their response depends on the decisions made during the analysis and addressing of the problem. Failures in this process can arise at various stages, including problem identification, evaluation of potential solutions, decision-making, or implementation.

In a European Union (EU) context, such failures can have significant implications, particularly in highly regulated industries. For example, under the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), organisations must respond to data breaches swiftly and effectively. A failure to accurately identify the problem, assess the root cause, or implement an appropriate corrective action plan could result in substantial fines, reputational damage, and loss of stakeholder trust. Similarly, in compliance with EU directives such as REACH (Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation, and Restriction of Chemicals), companies must resolve complex challenges to ensure safe chemical management. Errors in interpreting legal requirements, risk assessments, or applying technical solutions can lead to compliance failures, underscoring the critical role of robust problem-solving skills in mitigating risks and achieving organisational objectives.

This underscores the importance of embedding systematic problem-solving methodologies, such as root cause analysis or structured decision-making frameworks, to prevent errors and ensure resilience in addressing challenges effectively.

4.5 Staffing

Employing suitably skilled and competent staff who can work safely is fundamental to achieving acceptable health and safety standards in any workplace. The recruitment process is, therefore, critical, and every role should have a well-defined job description outlining the nature of the position and the tasks the individual is expected to perform. Additionally, a person specification may be created, detailing the essential and desirable qualities a candidate should possess. These qualities may include qualifications, field-specific competence, relevant experience, skills, abilities, personality traits, and temperament, among others.

Employers must conduct appropriate pre-employment checks, such as verifying security clearances or reviewing criminal records, where necessary. The extent of these checks will depend on the nature and sensitivity of the role, with some positions requiring thorough and detailed investigations. It is the employer's responsibility to select candidates who can perform their duties safely and interact effectively with colleagues, the organisation, and external stakeholders, such as the general public or contractors.

The interview process plays a pivotal role in staff selection but is not always used to its full potential. It is essential to have clear objectives for the interview, ensuring that the questions align with the job description and person specification. To accurately assess a candidate's suitability, interviewers should foster an environment where candidates feel at ease, encouraging them to speak openly and candidly.

Open-ended questions are particularly effective in eliciting comprehensive responses, offering insight into a candidate's knowledge, experience, and thought processes. For instance, asking, *"What are your views on active safety monitoring techniques?"* allows the candidate to demonstrate their understanding, discuss practical applications, and share relevant experience. In contrast, closed questions such as, *"Do you know what active safety monitoring techniques are?"* only elicit a yes or no response, missing an opportunity to gain valuable insights.

It is equally important to assess how well a candidate aligns with the organisational culture and the dynamics of the team they will join. This cultural fit often relies on subjective assessments, such as gut feelings and first impressions, but these can be supported by more structured methods like personality profiling or psychometric testing. Such tools help identify individual strengths, weaknesses, interpersonal skills, and personality traits, offering a more balanced approach to evaluating a candidate's potential contribution to the workplace.

In the context of the European Union (EU), where diverse and multicultural workforces are common, ensuring that recruitment practices comply with equality directives and non-discrimination laws is vital. Employers must ensure that processes are

transparent, inclusive, and aligned with EU standards, promoting fairness while upholding workplace safety and organisational effectiveness. For example, EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) mandates careful handling of personal data collected during recruitment, such as background checks and psychometric assessments, ensuring confidentiality and compliance.

4.5.1 Maintaining Interest and Levels of Motivation

An essential strategy for minimising human error is fostering awareness among staff, ensuring they consistently engage in safe behaviours. Motivation plays a critical role in this, and there are several approaches to generating and sustaining it:

- **Recognition and encouragement** for adhering to organisational goals and standards.

- **Negative reinforcement**, such as disciplinary actions, for non-compliance.

- **Role modelling** by managers who demonstrate exemplary behaviours.

- **Provision of appropriate information and training** tailored to employee needs.

- **Integration of health and safety into all levels of strategic and operational planning.**

- **Effective communication, consultation, and worker involvement.**

Reward schemes can also enhance motivation, though these must be carefully managed to avoid unintended consequences, such as employees under-reporting incidents to secure rewards.

Job satisfaction is another significant factor influencing human reliability. Employees who are disengaged or disinterested in their work are more likely to lose focus, leading to apathy and potential errors. Conversely, individuals who find their work personally fulfilling and aligned with organisational goals tend to remain motivated and are less prone to mistakes.

Job design can support motivation by incorporating elements such as:

- Autonomy in decision-making.

- Opportunities for participation in planning and processes.

- Flexibility and variety through task rotation.

- Involvement in tasks from initiation to completion.

Appraisal schemes are instrumental in identifying employees' development needs while considering their personal aspirations alongside organisational requirements.

This balance can profoundly affect employee morale, fostering responsiveness and self-motivation. Appraisals should be linked to **Training Needs Analysis (TNA)**, which helps shape tailored training programmes not only in health and safety but also in broader aspects of the employee's role.

In the **EU context**, such practices align with the principles of the **European Pillar of Social Rights**, particularly those concerning fair working conditions and active participation in the workplace. For example, the EU's emphasis on lifelong learning and workplace inclusivity supports the integration of health and safety training into broader skill development initiatives, ensuring that employees feel valued and empowered. A notable case is the EU's **VISION ZERO** campaign, which highlights the role of proactive safety culture and worker engagement in reducing accidents and errors across sectors.

4.6 Negative Health and Safety Cultures

A negative health and safety culture exists when health and safety are not prioritised within an organisation, and senior management fails to provide visible leadership or demonstrate genuine commitment to these principles. This lack of emphasis can lead to a workplace environment where health and safety is perceived as a low priority or an inconvenience rather than a fundamental value.

Organisational culture is dynamic and evolves over time. While the goal should always be to enhance health and safety practices, it is crucial to recognise that culture can also deteriorate. For example, an organisation with a previously strong safety record may experience cultural regression if leadership becomes complacent, fails to allocate adequate resources, or neglects to reinforce safety protocols during periods of operational change or rapid expansion.

In the context of the European Union, directives such as the Framework Directive 89/391/EEC stress the employer's responsibility to ensure workplace safety. A failure to adhere to these requirements can have tangible consequences. For instance, in sectors like construction or logistics, overlooking health and safety measures—such as failing to maintain equipment, neglecting training programmes, or ignoring worker feedback— can result in increased incidents of injury, absenteeism, and legal repercussions.

Case Study: Italian Workplace Safety Concerns

In May 2024, the UIL labour union in Milan organised a protest to highlight the alarming number of workplace fatalities in the Lombardy region. Protesters placed 172 mock coffins in Piazza La Scala, each representing a worker who died on the job in the previous year. The union's campaign, titled "Zero Deaths," aimed to draw attention to the 1,041 workplace fatalities that occurred in Italy in 2023. This protest underscores the critical need for organisations to foster a positive health and safety culture to prevent such tragedies.

AP News

4.6.1 Reasons for the Development of a Negative Culture

A variety of factors can contribute to the emergence of a negative organisational culture, most of which stem from human factors and their influence on the way organisations function. When examined through the lens of our own experiences, these factors often appear predictable.

Reorganisation

Organisational restructuring can significantly impact the cultural fabric of a workplace. For instance, a shift in the senior management team might bring in individuals who lack the same level of commitment to health and safety as their predecessors, resulting in cultural erosion. Similarly, the reorganisation of established workgroups can disrupt existing norms, values, and methods that previously contributed to a positive culture. Rebuilding these cultural foundations is essential to maintaining a robust safety culture.

In the context of the EU, where cross-border mergers and structural adjustments frequently occur due to regulatory harmonisation or market demands, the potential for such cultural disruptions is even greater. For example, during the restructuring of multinational organisations to comply with EU directives, differences in national work cultures and approaches to health and safety might exacerbate these challenges.

Lack of Confidence

A strong health and safety culture requires unified belief and commitment across all organisational levels, from senior management to front-line staff. When workers lose confidence in leadership or fail to understand or align with organisational goals, a negative culture can emerge. In such cases, countercultures or subcultures often form, supporting individual workgroups rather than the organisation as a whole.

This fragmentation reflects an attempt to counter perceived threats, such as a lack of transparency or poor leadership, but it can also lead to internal conflict. Within the EU, differences in national cultures and leadership styles may amplify such issues in organisations operating across member states. For example, inconsistent application of health and safety protocols between facilities in different countries can undermine trust and cohesion.

Uncertainty

Uncertainty is another major factor that can destabilise a positive culture. A clear example is the threat of redundancy, where employees facing an uncertain future may become defensive and view colleagues as competitors. This undermines group cohesion and safety culture.

Other sources of uncertainty, often linked to organisational change, include:

- Introduction of new technologies (e.g., automation driven by EU-wide digital transformation initiatives).

- Changes to roles and responsibilities following compliance with EU labour laws.

- Business expansion or contraction due to fluctuations in the Single Market.

- Mergers and acquisitions, such as those prompted by EU competition rules.

While some uncertainty is unavoidable, fostering honesty and transparency can reduce suspicion and help sustain a safety culture even during periods of change.

Trust and Mixed Messages

Cultural stability relies on the collective acceptance of shared values and norms, which includes management as part of the group. Actions that undermine trust can significantly damage this stability. For instance, if management is perceived as dishonest or inconsistent, they risk losing the workforce's respect and confidence.

Mixed messages are particularly harmful in the context of health and safety. For example, managers may articulate a commitment to safety in policies while simultaneously imposing deadlines or productivity targets that compromise safe practices. This inconsistency can lead employees to disregard health and safety messages, viewing them as insincere.

In the EU, where organisations often operate under the scrutiny of extensive health and safety regulations, inconsistency can also lead to legal repercussions, further eroding trust. For example, failing to uniformly enforce workplace safety standards across different locations within the EU may suggest double standards, exacerbating distrust.

Guarding Against Negative Influences

Proactively identifying and mitigating these negative influences is key to building and sustaining a positive health and safety culture. In the EU context, leveraging frameworks such as the EU's *Framework Directive 89/391/EEC* on workplace safety and health can provide a solid foundation for addressing cultural challenges. Emphasising transparency, consistency, and leadership commitment across all organisational levels will support the development of a unified, resilient culture.

3.7 Effecting Change

Bringing about change, particularly genuine cultural transformation within an organisation, is a complex and gradual process. It cannot be achieved overnight, yet it remains one of the most critical challenges for any health and safety professional and cannot be avoided.

As explored earlier in this lesson, the **four key characteristics of a positive health and safety culture**, as outlined in HSG65, provide the foundation upon which such change can occur. Achieving this necessitates a series of well-planned, sequential steps, carried out with careful consideration and meaningful consultation. These steps might include:

1. **Define aims and objectives**, and develop a policy framework to achieve them.

2. **Assign roles and responsibilities** to individuals and groups, ensuring their competence through appropriate training where required.

3. **Communicate the aims, objectives, and policies** to all staff, along with their roles and responsibilities within the system.

4. **Implement the policy** by supporting it with practical procedures, tools, and resources.

5. **Monitor implementation** to ensure adherence to policies and procedures, with adequate supervision in place.

6. **Audit and review the system's effectiveness**, introducing improvements as necessary and involving employees at all levels in the process.

This incremental and inclusive approach is generally more effective than attempting sudden, dramatic interventions. It prioritises the involvement of as many people as possible, ensuring they understand the rationale for changes and encouraging ownership of the systems developed. Such involvement fosters a shared value system—essentially, the development of a safety culture. This culture can then be reinforced by other initiatives, such as ongoing risk assessment programmes and training, which promote consultation and cooperation.

Lessons from Experience

Drennan (1992) highlights key considerations for successful cultural change:

- **Avoid quick-fix solutions**: Deep cultural problems cannot be resolved by superficial measures such as training sessions or publicity campaigns. Genuine safety culture development often spans years, particularly in larger or more complex organisations.

- **Set clear, realistic goals**: Lack of clarity in objectives or attempting to address too many goals simultaneously leads to confusion and inefficiency. A balanced, focused approach is critical.

- **Maintain consistency**: Constantly shifting goals or introducing new systems can erode trust and credibility. Employees may view such changes as transient trends rather than meaningful improvements.

- **Demonstrate management commitment**: Effective leadership goes beyond issuing policies or delegating responsibilities. Managers must visibly and authentically support the health and safety system, demonstrating its value and benefits to build trust and commitment organisation-wide.

- **Address resistance**: Employees, including middle managers, may resist change due to insecurity or a fear of the unknown (e.g., concerns about retraining). Providing reassurances and demonstrating the benefits of new systems or skills can help mitigate this resistance.

The Path to Success

Introducing change, particularly cultural change, is undeniably challenging. It requires systematic planning, strong leadership, and a sensitive approach that takes into account the perspectives and concerns of all stakeholders. Transforming an organisation's culture involves embedding new ideas, values, and methods—shaping how people think and how they view health and safety.

For EU organisations, the process aligns with broader directives, such as the **EU Framework Directive 89/391/EEC**, which emphasises a participative approach to improving workplace health and safety. Examples of successful implementation across the EU include initiatives where risk management systems, training programmes, and collaboration between employers, employees, and regulators supported cultural change.

While the journey is complex, the rewards are significant: a safer, more cooperative, and more productive working environment built on a robust safety culture.